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■ POLICE

69-year-old Woman found dead in field

QMI Agency

PELHAM — Niagara Regional Police are investigating the death of a 69-year-old Welland woman found in a field near Chantler Rd. west of Poth St this past Friday.

The woman's car, a grey 1994 Ford Taurus, was found a short distance away.

Police are withholding the identity of the woman, pending notification of her next of kin.

Investigators from the NRP collision reconstruction unit determined the vehicle had been travelling east on Chantler Rd. at about 4:30 a.m. when it left the pavement, drove through a ditch on the south side of the road and came to rest in the field.

■ NATIONAL SWEATER DAY: Warming up to a sustainable future



EDDIE CHAU Staff Photo

E.L. Crossley students Alexandra Watson, Robert Fiorella, Erin Prysiak and Josie Teed wore their favourite sweaters Thursday as the school celebrated National Sweater Day. An initiative of Loblaw and World Wildlife Fund Canada, National Sweater Day encourages individuals to turn down the heat a few degrees and bundle up in a sweater to take action against climate change and work towards a sustainable future. Participating students and staff were asked to sign a pledge form to conserve energy while winning eco-friendly prizes such as biodegradable mechanical pencils and reusable insulated coffee mugs.

■ RETIREMENT

Council exploring pension plans

MARYANNE FIRTH
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — Despite opting out several terms ago, Pelham town council is exploring opting back in to the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System.

Ward 1 Coun. Richard Rybiak brought forth a motion at the Feb. 6 meeting requesting council look into participating in OMERS — one of Canada's largest pension plans.

The request arose from a discussion at last year's Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, where Rybiak, who has sat on town council since winning a byelection last year, learned councils in many other municipalities, including some in Niagara, participate in the pension system.

His motion was approved and town staff directed to set up the presentation.

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upfront

■ OBITUARY

'When Larry spoke, people listened'

EDDIE CHAU
and MARYANNE FIRTH
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — The flags at Pelham town hall fly at half-mast today as the community mourns the loss of Larry Vasas.

The respected former town councillor and community activist died Sunday at St. Catharines General Hospital. He was 69.

A retired educator, Mr. Vasas spent his entire career, spanning more than 30 years, at E.L. Crossley Secondary School.

Dave Oleniuk has fond memories of his longtime friend, with whom he shared the history department work at the local high school for many years.

Oleniuk remembers Mr. Vasas as an always-active member of the community, whether he was acting as auctioneer for the Fabulous Fenwick Lions annual plant sale, or driving his rebuilt convertible as part of the town's annual Canada Day parade.

"He was a family man," Oleniuk said, "but he also had a lot of friends in Fonthill



Larry Vasas

and Fenwick."

Many of those friendships stemmed from his involvement with the Lions, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 613 and town council, for which he held his seat from 1986 to 1994.

"We've known each other for 50 years," said former town councillor Brian Walker, who also taught at Crossley. "He's a very colourful individual that didn't hesitate to express his opinion."

Mr. Vasas fought strongly for what he believed in. For

instance, when the school board was deciding the fate of Pelham High School, Mr. Vasas stood up to state the importance of keeping the school open.

"Even though he taught at a different school he fought for us," said Walker, who previously taught at Pelham High. "He was very dedicated to his community."

That dedication translated to council chambers where Walker said Mr. Vasas went above and beyond to best represent his constituents.

Very professional and opinionated, Mr. Vasas and Walker spent many hours in debates but the issues never went beyond the council chamber doors.

Pelham regional Councillor Brian Baty remembers Mr. Vasas as a "gregarious and outgoing individual."

The pair taught at Crossley together for seven years and Baty was always impressed by his "very dramatic presentation style."

"When Larry spoke, people listened," he said.

"It's a great loss not only to his family, but to the community."

■ HORTICULTURE: Karin Vermeer helping to

Sewing roots of wisdom

VICTORIA GRAY
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — Karin Vermeer helps people plant a little bit of happiness.

"I just love plants," she says. "I just take great pleasure in seeing flowers bloom. It's a challenge for me and being able to share that with people is great."

Vermeer, once the familiar face of Vermeer's Garden Centre and Flower Shop, is speaking at Pelham Horticultural Society's Monday, Feb. 27, meeting at the Fonthill branch library about her new career in horticultural therapy.

Memberships to the horticultural society are \$7.

The first step in Vermeer's newfound profession is to help seniors get back into gardening by using gardens they have already established or by helping them to get them inexpensively.

"When seniors move into a residence they lose so much," she said. "They lose their home and garden and the ability to grow in their garden and so much more."

She wants to help give them some of that back, by doing plant activities with them, such as seeding, germinating, trimming, transplanting and planting outside.

"It's amazing to see the



MARYANNE FIRTH Staff Photo

Karin Vermeer hosts a garden activity session at Lookout Ridge Retirement Home in Pelham. She assists residents Thalia Dodginton, Bernice McIvor, Hazel Ott and Patricia Zoccoli in creating a Valentine's Day topiary out of English ivy.

difference that plants make in people's lives. Everyone's heard of music therapy and pet therapy. This is just another form of it, using plants," she says.

Vermeer currently visits 14 homes once a month for about two to three hours.

She also works with children and victims of brain injuries.

Vermeer says there is something about plants that put most people at ease. She used to see people decompress at her garden centre.

"It's about sight and smell and just getting back to nature," she says. "That's always been

therapeutic to people, just getting back to nature."

She finds children benefit from gardening because they learn about the miracle of life and get to spend some time outside, while people with brain injuries get to stimulate their senses and have the satisfaction of knowing they can still accomplish things they used to do.

"It gives them such a sense of self-worth, knowing they still have the ability to grow something. It really does something to the soul."

For more information visit www.karinvermeer.ca.

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■ **ART:** Students' work feature at Catholic Education Centre

Centre of creativity

EDDIE CHAU
PelhamNEWS Staff

WELLAND — If these walls could talk they would scream creativity.

The normally barren spaces at the Niagara Catholic District School Board Education Centre on Rice Rd. are the anchors of 41 pieces of work showcasing the creative talents of some of the region's youngest artists. Simple pencil work, watercolour paintings, sculptures and sock puppets — any medium one can think of is on display.

On Wednesday night, the school board opened its doors to parents, students and faculty to proudly display the works of intermediate students at the Intermediate Artists Gala.

Artistic consultant Jayne Evans says schools have sent in some of the best work of the year so far from grades 7 and 8.

While the education centre's walls

have showcased works from junior, senior and secondary students before, this is the first time intermediates have been featured in an exhibition, Evans says.

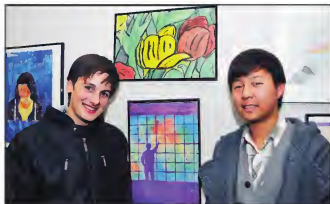
"Some works you see here are related to one another," she says. "The teacher might have taught a particular theme and the students took their own spin on it. All the works really speak to us."

Evans says school board office workers often visit the main lobby area to take in the exhibition, which will run until late March.

"The staff are really appreciative of the work. Every day they come down and see something different."

Education director John Crocco says family and friends of the featured students can come down to the education centre at any time to view their creativity.

"We truly have something special here," he says.



EDDIE CHAU Staff Photo

Jared Naar and Stephen Cho, Grade 8 students from St. Alexander School in Fonthill, used watercolours for their artwork which hangs as part of the intermediate artists exhibition at the Niagara Catholic District School Board Education Centre.



EDDIE CHAU Staff Photo

Karling Luciani, a Grade 7 student at Alexander Kuska School in Welland, was inspired by artist Andy Warhol when she created the snowflake art hanging above her.

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■ perspective

A tragic workplace loss

IF 10 northern Ontario miners died in a cave-in, there'd be national outrage. If an explosion at a Chemical Valley plant killed 10 workers, it would be the same.

At the highest levels of government, there'd be quick public condolences — not in faceless written statements, but in person. They would come the campaigns and media coverage reminding us, rightfully so, that one workplace death is too many, let alone 10 at once.

Why, then, the muted response — political and public — to Monday's southwestern Ontario crash that killed 10 of 13 migrant farm workers and a tractor? Instead of a preventable workplace loss, the crash has played out more as an avoidable traffic accident.

The migrants were loaded into a van that blew through a stop sign on a country road and was broadsided by the truck, whose driver also died. The workers, all but one from Peru, died a stone's throw from where they'd spent a gruelling day at a Perth County poultry farm vaccinating thousands of chickens for modest wages.

We don't know yet why the van driver, also a worker, failed to stop, a mistake for which he paid with his life. We do know the driver lacked the required F-class licence to operate the 15-passenger van. We don't yet know who the legal employer was, but we do know the van and commute home were part of the workplace.

Otherwise, Ontario's workplace insurance system wouldn't be covering costs of the dead and three survivors.

The premier offered his sympathies and there've been calls for an inquiry. No one's asking for a provincial day of mourning, but if dying on the job is on the consumer's table is an outrage and should be treated as such.

That's the least we can do for the memory of the 10 workers, and for the thousands of others who have died who toil on Ontario farms each year.

— Greg Van Moorle

Comment

Welland River floodplain mapping concerns

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority has the responsibility of ensuring accurate floodplain mapping for all watercourses in its jurisdiction and then subsequently controlling development in the floodplain to avoid potential injury or harm should water levels rise to threaten the property.

A recent study of the Welland River floodplain and that of its tributaries shows a significant change from former mapping results. This matter should be of concern to all who own property affected by the river and its supporting tributaries. It should be noted that Ontario's Conservation Authorities were formed following the disastrous storm referred to as "Hurricane Hazel" and need to be mindful of public safety related to adverse storms.

Since the last assessment of the Welland River floodplain, technology has changed and there are more modern and accurate modeling resources to assess current and past weather patterns as well as projecting the impact of a major



Brian Baty
REGIONAL
COUNCILOR VIEW

storm, commonly referred to as the "One Hundred Year Storm." While this new data shows a change in the floodplain mapping, NPCA staff are reviewing the data as it appears to be extreme, particularly in some of the tributaries feeding the Welland River. I was alerted to an inaccurate flyer that someone placed in mailboxes last fall and referred that matter to NPCA staff. While information in that flyer was inaccurate, there is reason for citizens to be aware of the changes noted by the consultant's study.

At this time the NPCA is awaiting the completion of the upper Welland River floodplain mapping and reviewing the current mapping for the Welland River to ensure its accuracy. This work should be completed by June of this year. In the meantime I have requested several

items with respect to the release of the final mapping results. Firstly, it is important to verify the accuracy of the new mapping and to make it clear that the mapping is not an arbitrary ruling by conservation staff; rather an accurate scientific study that takes into account the climate and river conditions that have changed over time. Secondly, I have requested that clear maps be produced to allow property owners to see what the former mapping floodplain included and to note the new levels. I have asked if the mapping took into account the plugged siphons taking the Welland River under the Welland Recreational Waterway as well as the Welland Canal. A request was made as to the potential cost of annual cleaning of the siphons to ensure unobstructed flow of water. When all studies are completed in June, that NPCA hold public information sessions to outline: 1) why the new study was undertaken; 2) what factors have changed since the last study; 3) explain what floodproofing entails and the projected costs to property owners. Finally I have

requested staff to explore the risks and liability of maintaining the former mapping levels and to allow a transition phase from the old to the new mapping restrictions.

Given the relatively flat nature of the properties abutting the Welland River and its tributaries, even a small rise in the vertical level of the floodplain could have significant consequences over a large horizontal area of the shoreline. Some years ago the NPCA sought a solution to the back and forth movement of the river as the Ontario Power Generation company opens and closes valves to direct the Niagara River water flow into the hydro facilities. This diversion of water pushes the Welland River upstream with the impact of the water up the river past Wellandport. The proposed solution at that time would have been in excess of twelve million dollars and would have had major negative effects on the river in particular in the lower section in the Chippawa area. A remediation fund was established by OPG to provide remediation programs for the Welland River such as the E.C Brown leeward project and riparian plantings along the river's banks.

There was considerable discussion and debate on this issue at the January meeting of the NPCA and the board passed a motion to establish a working group with staff to move forward with an implementation plan when the final reports are ready in June this year.

Brian Baty is a Niagara Regional Councillor for the Town of Pelham. Brian.baty@niagararegion.ca

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■ readers' views

Resident still awaits communication

Read the article "Ways of Working Together with Residents" by Dave Augustyn.

In his article it is stated: "letters, e-mail, phone calls, meetings, etc. You can also use standard communication methods to make a suggestion or get your point across."

At the end of the editorial the mayor writes: "These are some of the ways in which council and I welcome your involvement in the town! You may contact Mayor Dave at Mayordave@pelham.ca."

If you look below this email you

can see that you can see I have written to you (Mayor Dave) via e-mail five different occasions concerning Pelham's urban forest and it's state in the older downtown core. I even addressed this issue with you at a summer event where you told me again that you would have to get back to me.

I am still waiting for your reply. Are you going to address this e-mail? Being a citizen of Pelham for over 34 years and in living at the same address I do expect much more from our mayor. My experience with you over this issue has proven to be less than satisfactory and in my view is not respectful of the office you hold. I do hope that you and council

will review this issue and that you will get back to me.

Copies of the "Town of Pelham Urban Forestry Guidelines" and "Town of Pelham Street Tree Maintenance" can be obtained from me to help council understand this issue. These documents have been developed to provide the Town of Pelham with a proactive, environmentally appropriate tree planting, maintenance and replacement guidelines for urban areas. The character of urban and rural area is shaped by an abundance of trees. Municipalities that put in the effort to maintain mature trees and plant new ones are desirable places to

live.

Mike Jones
Fontheill

Highway 20 still a mess

In reference to Pelham News Feb. 3 - "The Issues with Highway 20"

I Brian Baty thinks the seam repair that Rankin Construction did on Hwy. 20 is good, he has either been away on vacation or does not use Hwy 20. It's falling apart and water is getting in. It will be a mess come spring time.

Ron Riva
Fontheill

■ **WAR BICENTENARY:** Calvin Arnt to share tales at Fonthill library next week

1812 re-enactor: 'I was always a history nerd'

EDDIE CHAU
Tribune Staff

PELHAM — There's more to being a re-enactor than just wearing a snazzy costume.

For Calvin Arnt, captain of the First Regiment Lincoln Militia, a local 1812 re-enactment group, being a re-enactor is about showcasing a piece of history to the audience.

And when he dons his costume — which is made to be as authentic as it was in the early 1800s — people take notice and get a real-life history lesson at the same time.

With the bicentenary of the War of 1812 this year there's no better time than to get involved in the historic festivities. Arnt, a history teacher by day at Eden High School in St. Catharines, is happy to

share his knowledge about the war with anyone willing to listen.

"I was always a history nerd," said Arnt. "I have an interest early on about the early founders of our country. I wanted to more with my passion. One day I connected with a local (re-enactment) group to help me get started in this hobby."

Arnt has been a re-enactor for the past 13 years, 10 of which involved with the First Regiment Lincoln Militia. What started as a group of individuals passionate about recreating the history of the War of 1812 has grown into a non-profit organization as of last year, Arnt said.

There are many ways to get involved in the 1812 bicentennial festivities, Arnt said. He will share a few examples

at a presentation at Pelham Public Library Wednesday, Feb. 22, at 7:30 p.m.

On that night Arnt will talk about his experiences as a re-enactor and what's going on during the bicentennial festivities and how people can get involved.

"There will be samples of clothing from what men and women wore at the time," Arnt said of his presentation. "I will describe what will typically go on during a re-enactment. There's certainly more than just military activity."

Arnt's presentation will be part of Pelham library's 1812 bicentennial events. Admission is \$2.

For more information call the library at 905-892-6443.

echau@wellandtribune.ca
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Supplied photo
Calvin Arnt, Captain of the First Regiment Lincoln Militia, will be giving a presentation about being a War of 1812 re-enactor when he visits Pelham Public Library Feb. 22

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■ COMMUNITY

Bowl for Kids sake ... and a free meal

EDDIE CHAU
PelhamNEWS Staff

WELLAND — It's a tasty incentive for Niagara College employees.

Staff and faculty at the school's Welland and Niagara-on-the-Lake campuses have been issued a challenge by David Veres, dean of community and health studies. The challenge: those people who can raise the most money for the Niagara chapters of Big

Brothers Big Sisters will eat for free.

"Whoever raises the most money I will take them out for dinner at Benchmark (restaurant in Niagara-on-the-Lake)," said Veres, honorary chair of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Bowl for Kids Sake.

There's one catch, however. The money must be raised while wearing multi-coloured shoes and hurling a ball down a bowling lane towards 10 free-standing pins.

Strikes aren't mandatory and gutterballs are optional.

It's the first year Veres has chaired Bowl For Kids Sake, a fundraiser for Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Niagara and related area organizations.

Up to 72 teams can participate in the all-day bowling event.

Veres has set the fundraising goal for \$35,000 this year but is hopeful the event will exceed the goal. He encouraged anyone from the community to form their own team and bowl their hearts out for a worthwhile cause.

"It's a fun, competitive event," Veres said. "There's a lot of fellowship to be had between Bigs and Littles. Every year we get a good turnout. We hope many will come out to bowl."

Participants can sign up for three time slots at the Bowl-o-Rama event in Welland: 2 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Teams can dress up for the occasion with prizes going towards the best costumes.

Registration is available online at www.bbbsniagara.ca, or by calling 905-735-0570.



EDDIE CHAU Staff Photo

David Veres, honorary chair for Bowl for Kids Sake, encourages people to pick up a pledge form and get involved and compete at the event Feb. 25 at Bowl-o-Rama in Welland.



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■ EDUCATION: E.W. Farr welcomes potential students



EDDIE CHAU Staff Photo

Three-year-old Jesse Parker plays in the sandbox at the kindergarten class at E.W. Farr School in Fenwick. The school opened its doors to potential students during its kindergarten open house.

■ FONTHILL-SINGER'S CORNERS WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Erland Lee Museum to open in spring

PAMELA BRONN
Special to PelhamNews

PELHAM — Twelve members of the Fonthill-Singer's Corners Women's Institute meeting at the home of Ruth Dudlak in Welland were slated to learn the Erland Lee (Museum) Home in Stony Creek will be opening later in the spring.

This museum was the home of Erland and Janet Lee and the site where the constitution of the women's institute was penned 115 years ago. To celebrate this occasion there will be a gathering in the drive-house on Feb. 19 at 1:30 p.m., at which time the new cookbook compiled by the Friends of the Lee will be launched.

Beautiful two-year Lee

Home calendars will also be available.

A generous amount of non-perishable food items was gathered in answer to the roll call and will be taken to Thorold Community Cares by the Secretary, Marion Egertier.

It was announced that Elsie Stephenson has replaced Carol Innes as Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) president, with Evelyn Peck as President-elect.

Plans were discussed for hosting the 2012 District annual meeting with a tentative date of May 23.

Bowen Rd. branch will be holding their Valentine/Luncheon on Feb. 11 starting at 11:30 a.m. at the All Peoples' Memorial Church in Ridgeway. Tickets are \$7.

Sophie Paroschky displayed the plaque she accepted on behalf of this branch for the highest points awarded at the Niagara Regional Exhibition.

For the Education program, Ruth Dudlak passed around pictures of famous Canadians for the members to identify. Pam Bronn quizzed them on various topics from the Trivial Pursuit game.

A letter from Canada Comforts reported that a container of children's clothes had arrived safely in Sudan, and was being distributed. This branch knits and sews quantities of articles for this project.

The next meeting will be held March 7 at 1:30 p.m. at the home of Sylvia Quigley on Metter Rd.



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■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Region likes 'roll up your sleeves' plan

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI Agency

ST. CATHARINES — Niagara Region could go sector by sector to tackle economic development, under a new model recommended for public feedback.

Regional council's integrated community planning committee supported opening a 60-day window for the public to weigh in on the model, the product of a year-long process and a four-month transition plan to move away from the existing Niagara Economic Development Corp.

The new model will slim it down to a regional department and target economic sectors and clusters, like agriculture, through the help of contracted specialists.

If council approves, the plans will be sent for 60 days of feedback after councillors extended that period from the initial 30 days.

"I see this as a no-BS approach, a roll-up-your-sleeves approach," Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn said as councillors mulled over the plan.

"It's a fresh new view for the NEDC."

The period to gather feedback was extended after Welland Coun. George Marshall called for it.

"I don't want to be branded as the one who pushed this through so fast we didn't know what was going on," he said.

The new development model would be headed by a director who would report to Reg. CAO Mike Trojan, and would be guided by an advisory body of business and community partners.

It would focus on economic clusters specifically and look to contract experts specializing in those fields.

That's a departure from having economic development officers who generalize and cover everything, though officers in St. Catharines, Welland, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne and Fort Erie would still play a role in the new process.

Running on a base budget of \$1.7 million, it would employ 12 people, including six full-time employees. That's down from 18 at the NEDC.

Economic development transition manager Verne Milot noted most of Niagara's employers are small and medium-sized businesses and the days of trying to lure big factories here are gone.

The province lost about 118,000 jobs from 2008 to 2010, he said, and there are only 816,000 left.

"I for one want to stand here and promise Niagara a big manufacturing job in the next 12 months," Milot

said. "Not that we're going to neglect it or walk away from it, but I ain't bloody hell gonna promise one."

He said the Region needs to think of itself as a racehorse when it comes to keeping jobs in Niagara.

"I do not want to go forward with a horse that has a heavy jockey, or a horse that's been eating bad oats," he said.

Milot noted the Region needs to lay out effective strategic partnerships. At the moment, he said, "they're all over the place. There are more economic partnerships than there are weeds in a garden."

And he said the system should include a "dashboard" for keeping and expanding businesses in the Region, seeing gaps in service and plugging them.

"Taxpayers don't want to see a duplication of services, and I think they want to see a level of co-operation."

Port Colborne Coun. David Barrick

Port Colborne Coun. David Barrick said local development officers — a hurdle in the march toward a new development model — need to play a role. He said the Region shouldn't "move forward with blinders on" about the plan.

Businesses, he added, go to local municipalities before they talk to the Region.

"Taxpayers don't want to see a duplication of services, and I think they want to see a level of co-operation," he said.

St. Catharines Coun. Bruce Timma chided Milot for not mentioning the development officers in his report. Milot then led him back through the document, pointing out at least three references in his presentation to council.

He said he'd met with three of the five local EDOs, but two refused to meet him.

The plan drew praise from Port Colborne Mayor Vance Badaway.

"I think this really takes that next step to being Team Niagara," he said, adding he trusted the plan to include local officers.

Regional Chair Gary Burroughs chafed at the delay in moving forward with the plan.

"I hope we don't keep dragging this on," he said. "This is the Regional Plan. We want to work with everybody on it, but we don't need approval from everybody."

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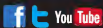
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■ **BUSES:** System carried just 28% of expected riders and earned 50% of projected revenue in first few months

Region transit off to sluggish start

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI Agency

THOROLD — Niagara Region Transit is off to a struggling start, carrying just one-quarter of the projected riders while earning half the money predicted in its first months on the road.

Regional council's public works committee heard Tuesday the 17,667 riders the region bus system drew from September through December was just 28% of the 63,000 riders it was projected to carry, equal to 240 riders a day.

It missed its \$143,000 cash target, too, pulling in an estimated \$70,929 for the region — about half the revenue aimed for.

The ridership and revenue report came on the heels of a separate recommendation to offset a March fare hike with monthly bus

passes and 10-ride tickets for the fledgling transit pilot project that connects St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls.

"We know that municipal transit systems are money-losers, but this seems extraordinary," said St. Catharines Coun. Andy Perkowski of the system's ridership.

The numbers were not surprising, said transportation director Joe Cousins. He said the consultant behind the system and bus-business counterparts at Durham Region Transit had cautioned that ridership could miss the mark in the early going. And he said there was positive news, as ridership rose as each month went on.

"Month over month there was growth in ridership, which is good news," he said.

"Overall, we're a little disappointed in the numbers."

Nevertheless, he said, "It does take a considerable amount of time for a system to mature and for ridership to be there."

The system's overall take was \$86,335, but the region only got \$70,929 because of cost-sharing with the three municipal bus systems. Those three, operating in Welland, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, received the other \$17,406.

Figures for the system's feeder routes to Port Colborne and Fort Erie weren't available.

It costs about \$2.7 million annually to run the system. The region was banking on generating just more than \$650,000 in revenue from fares.

The general fare for a single regional bus ride will leap to \$6 from \$5 in March. But the new fare plan, which the committee recom-

mended heavily, will see seniors and high schoolers still paying the \$5 rate.

A 10-fare ticket would cost \$45 and a monthly pass \$160. For seniors and students, it would be \$40 and \$130. Kids under age five would ride for free.

That still puts the region's fare at roughly double the average for a system in a municipality of its size.

And the region's monthly pass would cost more than a monthly pass on the Toronto Transit Commission, which runs \$126 for an adult fare.

If council approves that, staff figured it would take eight to 10 weeks to produce the passes. They figured they could realistically file the passes by the week of April 9 — about a month after the fare hike comes in.

Cousins said the region actually brought in more fare cash than its ridership would imply, because more riders rode direct, getting straight on and off a region bus. That means the region keeps the full fare. It must split the cash with the cities if a ride transfers from a municipal system.

He said ridership would have to increase by 13% every month in order for the region to meet its revenue target of just over \$650,000 for the year.

More likely scenarios would see growth of 5% to 10% each month, which would respectively earn the region 57% or 80% of the revenue it expected going in.

Speaking after the meeting, Cousins said the region's ridership is likely struggling because of high fares and a lack of student usage. The latter is being addressed by a mini-pilot project that will let Brock University and Niagara College students swipe their U-passes on the region system for a term, as of Feb. 6.

That won't help the system's finances, though: The U-passes are worked out with the three city bus systems.

The fare, Cousins said, is in part a matter of geography, and the region wants to get it lower.

"We fight the geography all the time," he said. "We don't have the large population that could lead to large ridership."

— with files from Marlene Bergsma

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■ **CHORUS NIAGARA:** Choir returned to Seaway Mall for sixth annual Singathon

A warm welcome on a cold day

ALLAN BENNER
PelhamNEWS Staff

WELLAND — The Seaway Mall is becoming a second home to Chorus Niagara, says mall president Mike Belcastro.

Ever since Chorus Niagara performed a flash mob at the mall's food court in November 2010, a video that has now been played nearly 38 million times on YouTube, "they seem to get a really warm welcome" whenever they perform there.

"It's just like they're back home," he said.

On Saturday choir members returned to their home away from home once again to perform their sixth annual Singathon Fundraiser at the shopping centre's Centre Court.

It was also the second time the 100-voice choir held the Singathon at the mall, under the leadership of artistic director Robert Cooper.

Last year, the event was highlighted by a wedding proposal to Chorus Niagara member Sarah deGois, who, by the way, said "Yes." Belcastro said deGois and her new husband Brendan Mater have

recently become parents.

Last year was one of the most successful fundraising events the choir has had yet, bringing in \$2,800 during the performance and \$43,000 in total when sponsorships were added up.

Money raised at Saturday's event had yet to be tallied up.

With the help of Cooper, who provided crash courses in conducting, several area community leaders had an opportunity to lead the chorus during the Singathon, ranging from Welland's acting mayor, Paul Grenier, to United Way of South Niagara executive director Peter Papp.

Despite the cold snowy weather that arrived in Welland that morning, it didn't deter the Chorus Niagara members from travelling from throughout the region to be there. The warmth of the welcome they received was worth the drive to Welland, said Lyn Hibbert, the manager of the children's choir.

In addition to chorus' repertoire of popular and classical music, including the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*, the song they performed on the YouTube video, the children's choir also sang seven songs for the audience of music fans.



ALLAN BENNER Staff photo

Chorus Niagara returned to Seaway Mall Saturday for its sixth annual Singathon fundraiser. The 100-voice choir performed from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., filling the shopping centre with music.

How Would You Like to Have Beautiful Hair?

My name is Marianne Schneider. I am 54 years old and I have had hair problems as long as I can remember. I have experimented with an endless array of shampoos, sprays, hair treatments and conditioners and I have spent an enormous amount of money in hair salons. But all those efforts were to no avail... the results didn't last more than a few hours, at best.

When I was 49 it got even worse - one day I started shedding large tufts of hair. I consulted doctors and had my hormone status analyzed. I tried Schuessler salts and body detox therapy, none of which had any lasting effect. Finally, I had my hair cut short and only ventured into public wearing a headscarf because, by now I had so little hair left that my scalp was clearly visible. My friends pretended not to notice and told me it wasn't that bad. Sometimes though, I caught them sneaking glances at my head. And those stares at the supermarket or at the cinema - sometimes it was simply unbearable.

About three years ago, I met a woman who took me aside and asked, "Do you have a



problem with your hair? Have you ever heard of silica?" Then she told me her own tale of woe, she said, "I had the same problem as you. Three years ago I suffered a lot of stress in my job and personal life and I started losing all of my hair. My daughter suggested that I try Original Silicea Balsam." This woman told me it took about three months, but you know, her hair looked remarkable!

So I tried Original Silicea Balsam and before long my hair actually started to grow back! In time it became much thicker and it felt much stronger. After about six months my hair had a wonderful shine and it looked very healthy.

Now I have the beautiful hair I have been dreaming of all of my life. Although I am still the object of sneaky glances, and again it's because of my hair - but now I revel in those glances admiring my beautiful, healthy hair.

Marianne Schneider

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■ JULIA TURNER HOPE CUP



ALLAN BENNER Staff Photo

From left, sponsors Mike Konderka, Rick Sabucca, and Tina Turner, Julia Turner's mother, hold the new Julia Turner Memorial Hope Cup that Sabucca created for the annual fundraising event being held in Julia's memory.

Public Notice

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'This is all about hope'

ALLAN BENNER
PelhamNEWS Staff

WELLAND — It was the kind of day organizers of the Julia Turner Hope Cup were hoping for — lots of snow.

However, the cold temperatures didn't arrive soon enough to freeze the Chippawa Park pond, and the participants opted for ball hockey when they gathered for the tournament Saturday. But after a year with very little winter weather, the arrival of the snow just in time for the tournament was a pleasant surprise for organizer Paul Turner, Julia's father.

"My daughter has somehow spun some magic for us, she's looking down on us thinking that this is pretty special," he said.

Julia died on Dec. 23 after a seven-month battle with cancer. She was only 15 years old. But despite her young age, her father said she led a great deal to help the less-fortunate in the community.

"My daughter has always been connected to children and vulnerable people," Turner said.

After Julia died, Turner said he started thinking of doing something in her memory. With the annual Hope Cup Pond Hockey Tournament quickly approaching, he decided to dedicate that

event to her.

"Life is fragile, but this is all about hope. It's celebrating a life."

More than 80 people each paid a \$100 registration fee and spent the day playing ball hockey on the paved parking lot on the east side of the park. Hundreds more showed up to lend their support, including relatives of Julia's who arrived from throughout southern Ontario and elsewhere for the event.

Turner said the level of participation in the event was a reflection of the impact Julia had on the community.

"It's all about my daughter really, it was testament to her. That's the key," he said.

"It's unbelievable," said sponsor Mike Konderka from Black Creek Leisure Homes. "There was a lot of sponsors, a lot of corporate sponsors."

Konderka, who also helped organize the event, said dozens of those sponsors pitched in more than 100 prizes that were given away during the event. Sponsors also made cash donations for Hope Centre.

"There was a lot of community involvement out there," he added.

Konderka was pretty confident the event would bring in somewhere close to \$15,000 for Hope Centre when addi-

tional donations were tallied up.

That's significantly more than any of the previous Hope Cup pond hockey tournaments have raised. Past Hope Cup tournaments have brought in about \$40,000 in total since the fundraising event's inception in 2004, not including the proceeds from Saturday's event.

In addition to raising money for the charity, Konderka said it was also a lot of fun for participants.

"The objective is to raise awareness for homelessness. That was Paul's initial vision, and it was Julia's vision," he said.

Konderka said though Julia Turner was only 15 she had already done a great deal to help others in her community, whether it was volunteering at Hope Centre or helping prepare Harvest Kitchen meals.

"She was such a big advocate for the homeless," Konderka said. "Anything that Julia did, she always did it for somebody else."

As a result of her death, the whole community came together "to honour her memory and raise money for something she was a big advocate for," he added.

In addition to raising as much money as possible for Hope Centre, Paul Turner said he hoped to also spread awareness about the plight of people living in poverty.

"For us, the real key here is putting poverty on the front seat. It's right there, it's front and centre," he said, adding he hopes the success of the event sends a message to municipal, provincial and federal governments that "we want to get rid of poverty and here's a testament to that."

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■ LEMON AID: Wellander provides dental care for children in Guatemala



Welland resident Lynda Lemon, centre, visits with children at a local school during a recent trip to Guatemala.

Supplied Photo

Going extra miles for smiles

MARYANNE FIRTH
Tribune Staff

WELLAND — It's always a touching trek for Lynda Lemon.

Each time she makes the trip to Guatemala, the Welland resident meets new faces, brightens new smiles and makes new unforgettable memories.

Lemon annually visits the Central American country, where she volunteers through Wells of Hope to assist with a dental care program for local youth.

Held in partnership with Kindness in Action Service Society of Alberta, the initiative provides much-needed dental care to villagers at no cost during a week-long clinic.

Lemon worked as part of a six-member support team who set up the clinics in area schools and then transported, housed, fed and offered assistance to the 25 dental professionals providing care.

Through the clinics, dentists first treated local children, with any extra time used to treat parents and other villagers.

Lemon was touched by advice shared with the dentists prior to each clinic:

"You have the ability to make a difference for many people in Guatemala. Every person, and mouth, will remember you and be thankful. You have given

hope to many — that someone cared, that the pain will stop, that life can be better."

During each trip, Lemon is inspired by the resiliency of the people she meets. Though many Guatemalans are quite poor, they're kind and generous with what little they do have, she says.

"You have the ability to make a difference for many people in Guatemala. Every person, and mouth, will remember you and be thankful."

Lynda Lemon

She also finds inspiration in her fellow volunteers, who offer their time and talents to help less fortunate individuals and families.

After the clinics ended, Lemon's volunteer team had the opportunity to visit four local schools and spend time with children from the villages.

Thanks to donations from the Niagara community, Lemon was able to bring along gifts of school supplies, toys, clothing and toiletries for the youths, who were greatly appreciative.

see **SMILES** | page 16



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■ SMILES

Experience puts things in perspective for Lemon

FROM PAGE 15

While each smiling face helped brighten Lemon's day, there was one child in particular who warmed her heart.

During one of their visits, the volunteers dropped into a day-care type of centre run by the village mothers and found it empty. They learned programs had been cancelled for the day because of a new arrival.

The newborn's family welcomed Lemon in and even allowed her to hold little

"(She) thanked me and pointed to the sky, which I interpreted as meaning she would say a prayer of thanks."

Lynda Lemon

Antonio.

Having brought donations for the local children, Lemon was able to offer the little one's mother and grandmother blankets and baby sleepers for his care.

"She pulled me aside on our way out," Lemon says of the grandmother.

"(She) thanked me and pointed to the sky, which I

interpreted as meaning she would say a prayer of thanks."

Lemon calls the entire experience humbling and says it creates perspective of the important things in life.

mfirth@wellandtribune.ca
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Supplied Photo

Welland resident Lynda Lemon, far right, recently returned home from Guatemala, where she assisted with a week-long dental clinic facilitated by Wells of Hope and Alberta-based organization Kindness in Action.



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We're now well into 2012 and many of those well-intended New Year's resolutions have been strained or maybe even forgotten. But if one of your resolutions was to save for retirement or to get your financial house in order, it's not too late!

The deadline for 2011 retirement savings plan contributions is only two weeks away. This year, it's February 29th. I'm sure many people are getting calls from their Financial Advisor or Bank/Credit Union to book an appointment and get those last minute retirement contributions in for the tax season. How long has it been? Was the last call from them about 12 months ago? Sadly, this is the case for many investors.

Banks, in particular, often hold internal competitions for their staff to get as much money brought in as possible during this time. Pre-determined targets are set by their Head Office and they receive bonuses if they meet or beat that target. That's why the phone calls are ratcheted up starting in mid-December. It's not all negative though...it gets people thinking about their retirement, which is always a good thing. Once the money is in and invested, the pressure is over. Far too often, so is the focus on managing that money.

The Financial Advisor must actively manage that money to ensure the customer's retirement and financial goals stay on track. You may be contributing to your retirement plan, but how much does your Financial Advisor contribute to your plan? Let's look at what it means to have a retirement or investment plan actively managed.

"Actively managed" means that the Financial Advisor recommends and invests according to the client's risk tolerance. It means that the selection of investments bought and sold within the plan are based on financial markets and client comfort. It means that the client is educated on the investment product and not investing on a "hype of faith".

"You may be contributing to your retirement plan, but how much does your Financial Advisor contribute to your plan?"

When it comes right down to it, actively managing a client's portfolio means that the Financial Advisor reviews and evaluates the investments of his or her client on an ongoing basis. They meet with the client during the year to discuss the retirement or investment plan and make sure it continues to move in the right direction, revising investments where necessary.

If this isn't happening with your retirement or investment plan, perhaps it's time to consider moving your account. In the very least, a second opinion might be in order. To arrange a free no obligation review of your portfolio, or to discuss this article, contact me at larry.gallant@queensbury.com, visit my website at www.gallantfinancial.ca or call 905-892-2100.

Larry J. Gallant is a Independent Investment advisor with Queensbury Securities Inc., a member of the Canadian Investment Protection Fund and the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada.

The comments and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily the opinions of Queensbury Securities Inc. Securities mentioned may not suit all types of investors. Before making any investment decision, contact your investment advisor to discuss your investment needs.

■ **SANITATION:** Fee hasn't increased in 16 years

Garbage tag cost could double

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI Agency

THOROLD — It could cost you an extra buck to toss out that fat extra bag of trash, under a proposal heading to a regional council committee this month.

Niagara Region is considering doubling the price of garbage tags to \$2. It's calling for residents to weigh in on the issue by attending council's public works committee Feb. 21.

Currently, the average Niagara home is limited to one container of trash per week. Residents must buy the tags to put out more garbage.

"It's not fair to ask all the taxpayers of the region to pick up the tab for 250,000 or 300,000 extra garbage bags," said St. Catharines Coun. Andy Petrowski, a vocal proponent of the plan.

Petrowski figured the \$2 tags would bring the program closer to running at cost and encourage people to recycle more. And he said the region hasn't raised its garbage tag prices in 15 years.

"It's less than a cup of coffee a day," he said.

"This is less than 15 cents a day. I think that's a fair charge."

Catherine Habermehl, the region's acting waste management director, said the price of the tags has remained static since the program started in 1996. She said the region's new collection service, launched last year, has seen recycling go up 16% and waste disposal down 14%, but there's room for improvement.

"We recognize that there's still organic matter that is in that bag, and there's still valuable recyclables that remain in that garbage bag," she said.

She said the region's waste diversion rate is about 43% right now.

At the moment, she said, residents are already using fewer bags. She said an audit in the fall and winter of 2010 found homes put out on average just over one container per week. In spring and summer it was less than one bag per household.

"Some people, they have embraced the changes," she said.

The tag system is used elsewhere, too.

In Durham Region, they cost \$1.50 and have been in use since 2003, the price having stuck since then.

But since then, said Durham waste services supervisor Joe McKenna, his region has gone to

biweekly trash pickup. Residents are limited to four containers every two weeks.

"Just using rough stats for 2011, we estimate there was about 44,000 (tags) that were sold," he said.

Still, he said, it's not supposed to rake in dough.

"It's not really intended to make money. It's just a service that's provided to residents."

McKenna said his region picks up the trash for six of the eight municipalities in Durham.

In Hamilton, garbage tags are a non-factor, said Pat Parker, director of support services for the city's waste management department. She said the city doesn't have them but sets a one-container-a-week limit on what homes can pitch.

She said the city's residential waste diversion rate is about 49%.

The city is reviewing its trash system at the moment, though. And she said the introduction of trash tags is possible.

"If there's still limits, they can certainly help to provide residents with flexibility," said Parker. But she said they could also hurt waste diversion rates.

Back in Niagara, St. Catharines Coun. Tim Rigby, who chairs council's public works committee, lauded the proposed hike.

"Hopefully, it will meet some of the additional cost it does cost to collect (garbage)," he said. "I think it's the right move. It's certainly in line with what other municipalities are doing."



Julie JoCSAK QMI Agency
Andrew Blais picks up garbage along Niagara St. in St. Catharines on Friday. Garbage bag tags prices may increase to \$2 from \$1, the first increase since 1996.




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Contest Rules:

Only original newspaper ballots or hand-drawn facsimiles accepted. No mechanical reproductions allowed. Employees of the Tribune, and their immediate families are not eligible. Winners of the Grand Prize will be determined by a random draw from all entries received by 5 p.m., Friday March 23, 2012. Winners will be contacted by phone. You do not have to fully complete ballot to win.

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PERSONAL BEST
AGAINST THE ODDS

Please provide a brief description of the nominee's contributions to their family and community as well as a brief description of the nominee's efforts in school. (You may attach your description if more space is required to a maximum of 1,000 words.)

Name of Nominee: _____

Address: _____

City/Town: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone #: _____

Age: ☐ 6-12 ☐ 13-18

Category: ☐ Cool to be Kind ☐ Against the odds ☐ Personal Best

NOMINATOR'S CHECKLIST

Before forwarding your nominations, please ensure you've completed the following steps:

Have You

- ☒ Signed the nomination form?
- ☒ Completed all sections of the nomination form?
- ☒ Provided a brief description of the nominee's contributions?

Nominator Name: _____
Telephone: _____
Signature: _____

NOMINATOR'S DESCRIPTION: _____

Mail or drop off completed nomination form to:

THE TRIBUNE 228 East Main St. P.O. Box 278 Welland, ON L3B 5P5

Please note: Complete nomination form, letters of support and any other materials submitted will not be returned

Judging Criteria

Nominees must be a resident of Pelham, Part Calborne, Wainfleet or Welland. Their accomplishments must have occurred within the past year. There is a 1,000 word limit for all nominations. No additional material will be accepted. Judges will rate each nominee from 1-10 in the following:

- What has the nominee accomplished during the past year?
- How has this accomplishment impacted on themselves and/or others?
- Why did the nominee set out to do this?

24 Semi Finalists will be honoured at the Great Kids Awards Gala on Sunday April 29th at Club Castrapignano

COOL TO BE KIND Nominees will have performed a service or act of kindness, support or encouragement to a friend, family, neighbour or stranger with no personal gain for themselves. This could be an ongoing or one-time service to an individual, group or community.

PERSONAL BEST Nominees will have achieved a level of performance beyond what might have been expected. This could mean achieving a top performance overall or performance to the best of their ability. Achievements can be in any area including business,

academics, athletics, music, art, writing, drama, etc.

AGAINST THE ODDS Nominees will have shown great strength, ambition and dedication in overcoming a mental, physical, personal, economic or environmental challenge to achieve a goal.

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